

DISCIPLINE OF THE PRIMITIVE CHURCHES
ILLUSTRATED AND ENFORCED.

THE
CIRCULAR LETTER

FROM THE
Ministers and Messengers

OF THE SEVERAL
BAPTIST CHURCHES

OF THE
NORTHAMPTONSHIRE
ASSOCIATION

Assembled at Olney, Bucks, May 21, 22, 23,
1799.



=CLIPSTONE=
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XXXV. Annual Affociation, Anno, 1799.



Letters were received from the following Churches, and many of them had Messengers* present at the Affociation.

Churches.	DERBYSHIRE.	Ministers.
1. Lofcoe	- - - -	Mr. Fletcher
	STAFFORDSHIRE.	
2. Burton-upon-Trent	- - - -	 Baldwin
	NOTTINGHAMSHIRE.	
3. Sutton-Ashfield	- - - -	 Holmes
4. Nottingham	- - - -	 R. Hopper
	LEICESTERSHIRE.	
5. Sheepshead	- - - -	 R. Mills
6. Leicester	- - - -	 B. Cave
7. Sutton-in-the-Elms	- - - -	 B. Evans
8. Arncliffe	- - - -	 T. Blundell
9. Foxton	- - - -	 J. Burton
	RUTLAND.	
10. Oakham	- - - -	 J. Jarman
	LINCOLNSHIRE.	
11. Spalding	- - - -	 Crapps
	CAMBRIDGESHIRE.	
12. Soham	- - - -	 Bland
	NORTHAMPTONSHIRE.	
13. Gretton	- - - -	 J. W. Morris
14. Clipstone	- - - -	 J. Edmonds
15. Guilsborough	- - - -	 J. Simmons
16. Braunton	- - - -	 A. Payne
17. Walgrave	- - - -	 A. Fuller
18. Kettering	- - - -	
19. Moulton	- - - -	
20. Northampton	- - - -	
21. Road	- - - -	 Heighton
	BUCKINGHAMSHIRE.	
22. Olney	- - - -	 J. Sutcliff
	BEDFORDSHIRE.	
23. Thorne	- - - -	
	HERTFORDSHIRE.	
24. St. Albans	- - - -	 Gill



STATE OF THE CHURCHES.

Received	{	On Profession	- -	88		Removed	{	By Dismissal	-	4
		By Letter	- -	8				Exclusion	-	50
		Restored	- -	2				Death	-	33
				98						87
Added...98---Decreased...87---Total Number...1862---Clear Increase...111										

* The Churches are requested to attend in future to the regular appointment of Messengers to the Affociation.

M Sheppard

*The Discipline of the Primitive Churches
Illustrated and Enforced.*

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MINISTERS AND MESSENGERS
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BAPTIST CHURCHES
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Maintaining the important doctrines of three equal persons in the Godhead; eternal and personal election; original sin; particular redemption; free justification by the imputed righteousness of Christ; efficacious grace in regeneration; the final perseverance of real believers; the resurrection of the dead; the future judgement; the eternal happiness of the righteous; and everlasting misery of such as die impenitent; with the congregational order of the Churches, inviolably;

To the several Churches they represent, or from which they have received Letters.

Grace be to you, and Peace, from God the Father, and from Jesus Christ our Lord.

BELOVED BRETHREN,

WITH gratitude we have now to acknowledge that our annual meeting has this year been numerously attended, and its services accompanied, we trust, with tokens of the divine presence. Agreeable accounts have been received from most of our churches, and we deeply lament that any of them are in circumstances unfavourable to peace and unity. We presume that the subject of our present address to you, brethren, will not be thought unseasonable, and we sincerely wish that all the churches in this connection may regard it with the strictest attention, being persuaded that the animosities and divisions experienced by religious societies frequently arise from a neglect of Gospel order, and the proper discipline of the Church.

When the apostles, by the preaching of the word, had gathered in any place a sufficient number of individuals to the faith of Christ, it was their uniform practice, for the farther promotion of his kingdom in that place, to proceed to the forming of them into a Religious Society, or Christian

Church. Being thus associated, in the name of Christ, divine worship was carried on, Christian ordinances observed, holy discipline maintained, and the word of life, as the light by the golden candlesticks, exhibited. Amongst them our Lord Jesus Christ, as the high priest of our profession is represented as walking; observing the good, and applauding it; pointing out the evil, and censuring it; and holding up life and immortality to those that should overcome the temptations of the present state.

Let us suppose him to walk amongst our churches, and to address us in the manner he addressed the seven churches in Asia. We trust he would find some things to approve; but we are also apprehensive he would find many things to censure. Let us, brethren, look narrowly into the *discipline* of the primitive Churches, and compare our own with it.

By discipline we do not mean to include the whole of the order of a Christian Church. We have already touched on these subjects in the course of our annual address to you. The particular object to which we shall, at this time, request your attention, is that part of church-government which consists in A MUTUAL WATCH OVER ONE ANOTHER, AND THE CONDUCT WE ARE DIRECTED TO PURSUE IN CASES OF DISORDER. A great part of our duty consists in cultivating what is lovely, but this is not the whole of it; we must prune as well as plant, if we would bear much fruit, and be Christ's disciples. One of the things applauded in the Church of Ephesus was, that *they could not bear them that were evil.*

Yet we are not to suppose from hence that no irregularity or imperfection whatever is an object of forbearance. If uniformity be required in such a degree as that every difference in judgement or practice shall occasion a separation, the churches may be always dividing into parties, which we are persuaded was never encouraged by the apostles of our Lord, and cannot be justified in trivial or ordinary cases. A contrary practice is expressly taught us in the Epistle to the Romans; (Ch. xiv.) and the cases in which it is to be exercised are there pointed out. An object of forbearance however must be one that may exist without being an occasion of dispute and wrangling in the Church: It must *not be to doubtful*

disputations. V. 1. It must also respect things which do not enter into the essence of God's *kingdom*, the leading principles of which are *righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Ghost.* V. 16, 17. That which does not subvert the gospel of the kingdom, nor set aside the authority of the King, though it be an imperfection, is yet to be borne with. Finally, it must be something which does not *destroy the work of God*, or which is not inconsistent with the progress of vital religion in the church, or in ones own soul. V. 20. In all such cases we are not to judge one another, *but every man's conscience is to be his judge.* V. 23.

In attending to those things which are the proper objects of discipline, our first concern should be to see that all our measures are aimed at *the good of the party, and the honour of God.* Both these ends are pointed out in the case of the Corinthian offender. All was to be done *that his spirit might be saved in the day of the Lord*, and to *clear themselves* as a church from being partakers of his sin. If these ends be kept in view they will preserve us from much error; particularly, from the two great evils into which churches are in danger of falling, false lenity, and unchristian severity. There is often a party found in a community who under the name of tenderness are for neglecting all wholesome discipline; or if this cannot be accomplished, for delaying it to the utmost. Such persons are commonly the advocates for disorderly walkers, especially if they be their particular friends or relations. Their language is, "He that is without sin, let him cast the first stone. My brother hath fallen to-day, and I may fall to-morrow." This spirit though it exists only in individuals, provided they be persons of any weight or influence, is frequently known to impede the due execution of the laws of Christ; and if it pervade the community, it will soon reduce it to the lowest state of degeneracy. Such for a time was the spirit of the Corinthians; but when brought to a proper sense of things what *carefulness it wrought in them, yea what clearing of themselves, yea what indignation, yea what fear, yea what vehement desire, yea what zeal, yea what revenge.*—In opposing the extreme of false tenderness others are in danger of falling into unfeeling severity. This spirit will make the worst of every thing, and lead men to convert the censures of the church into weapons of private revenge. Persons of this description know not of what manner of spirit they are.

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They lose sight of the good of the offender. It is not love that operates in them; for love worketh no evil. The true medium between these extremes is a union of *mercy and truth*. Genuine mercy is combined with faithfulness, and genuine faithfulness with mercy; and this is the only spirit that is likely to *purge iniquity*.* Connivance will produce indifference; and undue severity will arm the offender with prejudice, and so harden him in his sin: but the love of God and of our brother's soul are adapted to answer every good end. If we love God, like Lew, we shall know no man after the flesh, nor acknowledge our nearest kindred; but shall observe his word, and keep his covenant. And if we love the soul of our brother we shall say, 'He is fallen to-day, and I will reprove him for his good: I may fall to-morrow, and then let him deal the same with me.' Love is the grand secret of church discipline, and will do more than all other things put together towards insuring success.

In the exercise of discipline it is necessary to distinguish between faults which are the consequence of sudden temptation, and such as are the result of premeditation, and habit. The former requires a compassionate treatment; the latter a greater portion of severity. The sin of Peter in denying his Lord was great, and if noticed by the enemies of Christ, might bring great reproach upon his cause; yet, compared with the sin of Solomon it was little. He first gave way to licentiousness, then to idolatry, and on finding that God as a punishment for his sin had given ten tribes to Jeroboam, he sought to kill him. Cases like this are imminently dangerous, and require a prompt and decided treatment, like that which we should use towards a child fallen into the fire; in which a moments delay might be fatal, and in which hesitating tenderness would be the height of cruelty. *Of some have compassion, making a difference: others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh.*†

In all our admonitions regard should be had to the age and character of the party. An elder as well as other men may be in a fault, and a fault that may require to be noticed; but let him be told of it in a tender and respectful manner. While you expostulate with younger men on a footing of equality, pay a deference to age and office. *Rebuke not an elder, but entreat him as a father, and the younger men as brethren.*‡

* Prov. xvi. 6. † Jude 22, 23. See also Gal. vi. 1. ‡ 1 Tim. v. 1.

In the due execution of Christian discipline there are many things to be done by the members of churches *individually*; and it is upon the proper discharge of these duties that much of the peace and purity of a church depends. If we be faithful to one another there will be but few occasions for public censure. Various improprieties of conduct, neglects of duty, and declensions in the power of godliness are the proper objects of pastoral admonition. It is one essential branch of this office to *rebuke, and exhort with all long-suffering*.* Nor is this work confined to pastors: Christians are directed to *admonish one another*.† Indeed there are things which a wise and affectionate people will be concerned to take upon themselves, lest a prejudice should be contracted against the ministry, which may prevent its good effects. This is peculiarly necessary in the settling of differences, in which whole families may be interested, and in which it is extremely difficult to avoid the suspicion of partiality.

In all cases of *personal offence* the rule laid down by our Lord in the eighteenth chapter of Matthew ought to be attended to; and no such offence ought to be admitted before a church till the precept of Christ has been first complied with by the party or parties concerned.

In many cases where faults are *not* committed immediately against us, but which are unknown except to a few individuals, love will lead us to endeavour to reclaim the party if possible without any farther exposure. *A just man will not be willing unnecessarily to make his brother a public example.* The scriptures give peculiar encouragement to these personal and private attempts. *If any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him; let him know that he who converteth a sinner from the error of his way, shall save a soul from death, and hide a multitude of sins.*‡

In cases of *evil report*, where things are said of a brother in our hearing which, if true, must affect his character, and the purity of the church, it cannot be right to go on to report it. Love will not lead to this. Many reports we know are unfounded; or if true in the main, they may have been aggravated; or there may be circumstances attending the case, which if fully understood would make things appear

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* 2 Tim. iv. 2.

† Rom. xv. 14.

‡ James 5, 19, 20.

very different from the manner in which they have been represented. Now it is almost impossible that any one but the party himself should be acquainted with all these circumstances, or able to give a full account of them. No time therefore should be lost, ere we inquire at the hand of our brother, or if on any consideration we feel that to be unsuitable, it would be proper to apply to an officer of the church who may conduct it with greater propriety.

There are also cases of a still more public nature in which much of the peace and happiness of a church depend upon the conduct of its members in their individual capacity. The charge given by the apostle to the Romans, (Ch. xvi. 17, 18.) though applicable to a church, yet seems to be rather addressed to the individuals who compose it—*Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned, and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple.* The characters to be avoided appear to be persons whose object it is to set up a party in the church, of which they may be the heads or leaders, a kind of religious demagogues. Such men are found, at one time or other in most societies; and in some cases the peace of the churches has been invaded by strangers, who are not of their own community. Let the "brethren" have their eye upon such men. *Mark them.* Trace their conduct, and you will soon discover their motives. Stand aloof from them, and avoid striking in with their dividing measures. In case of their being members, the Church collectively considered ought no doubt to put away from amongst them such wicked persons: but as every collective body is composed of individuals, if those individuals suffer themselves to be drawn away, the church is necessarily thrown into confusion, and rendered incapable of a prompt unanimous and decided conduct. Let members of churches therefore beware how they listen to the insinuations of those who would entice them to join their party. Men of this stamp are described by the apostle, and therefore may be known, particularly by three things—First, By their doctrine: it is *contrary to that which has been learned of Christ.* Secondly, By their Selfish pursuits: *they serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own bellies.* Thirdly, By their insinuating whining pretences of affectionate regard towards their partizans: *by good words and fair speeches they deceive the hearts of the simple.*

To this may be added, there are duties on individuals in their behaviour towards persons who *lie under the censure of the Church*. If they still continue in a state of impenitence, persist in their sin, or be unreconciled to the churches' proceedings with them, it is of the utmost consequence that every member should act a uniform part towards them. We may it is true continue our ordinary and necessary intercourse with them as men, in the concerns of this life: but there must be no familiarity, no social interchange, no visitings to them, nor receiving visits from them, nothing in short that is expressive of connivance at their conduct. *If any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner, we must not keep company with such an one, no not to eat.*† If individual members act contrary to this rule, and carry it freely towards an offender, as if nothing had taken place, it will render the censure of the church of none effect. Those persons also who behave in this manner will be considered by the party as his friends, and others who stand aloof, as his enemies, or at least as being unreasonably severe; which will work confusion, and render void the best and most wholesome discipline. We must act in concert, or we may as well do nothing. Members who violate this rule are partakers of other men's sins, and deserve the rebukes of the church for counteracting its measures.

With respect to those things which fall under the cognizance of a church in its *collective capacity*, we earnestly recommend, in general, that every thing be done not only with a view to the honour of God, and the good of the party, as before observed, but *with a special regard to the revealed will of Christ*. That some kind of order be preserved in every community, is necessary to its existence. Decency, reputation, and even worldly policy, will induce us to take some notice of gross immoralities: but this is not Christian discipline; nor will it be productive of its salutary effects. In the choice of officers few if any churches would elect a profligate: but if opulence be allowed to supply the place of spirituality, or ambitious or litigious characters be preferred on the principle of expediency, as a means of keeping them in better humour, is it not carnal? So in matters of discipline, few churches would suffer a grossly immoral or litigious character to continue amongst them unnoticed:

† 1 Cor. v. 11.

but if instead of a calm impartial and decided procedure, we enter into pusillanimous compromises with the offender, consenting that he should withdraw of his own accord; if the crimes of rich men be either entirely overlooked, or but slightly touched, lest the *cause* should suffer from their being offended; or if the misconduct of poor men be disregarded on the ground of their being persons of little or no account, *are we not carnal, and walk as men?* Brethren! Are there any such things amongst us? Search and consider. Such things ought not to be. The private withdrawal of an individual, if it be without good reasons, may justify a church in admonishing him, and if he cannot be reclaimed, in excluding him: but it cannot itself dissolve the relation. Till such exclusion has taken place he is a member, and his conduct affects their reputation as much as that of any other member. With regard to a neglect of discipline lest it should injure the *cause*, what cause must that be which requires to be thus supported? Be it our concern to obey the laws of Christ, and leave him to support his own cause. If it sink by a fulfilment of his commandments, let it sink. He will not censure us for not supporting the ark with unhallowed hands. And if it be criminal to fear the rich, it cannot be less so to despise the poor. Let brotherly love abound towards both. Do all things without partiality, and without hypocrisy.

We cannot enumerate all the particular cases which fall under the cognizance of a Christian Church, but shall mention a few which are recorded in the Scriptures for our imitation.

A DEPARTURE FROM THE FAITH OF THE GOSPEL, OR ANY OF ITS LEADING DOCTRINES is an object of Christian discipline. *I would they were even cut off that trouble you—I have a few things against thee, because thou hast them who hold the doctrine of Balaam—so hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate.—A man that is an heretic, after the first and second admonition reject, knowing that he that is such is subverted, and sinneth, being condemned of himself.**

It is worthy of notice that the only passage in the New Testament wherein heresy is introduced as *an object of discipline*, makes no mention of any thing as composing it but

* Gal. v. 12. Rev. ii. 14, 15. Tit. iii. 10.

what relates to the principles of the party. It may be supposed that those who were accounted heretics by the apostles were as impure in their lives as they were antichristian in their doctrine, and that they were commonly disturbers of the peace and unity of the Churches: but however this might be, neither of these evils is alledged as the ground for which the heretic was to be *rejected*. All that is mentioned is this: *He is subverted, and sinneth, being condemned of himself.*

He is *subverted*; that is, his professed faith in the gospel is in effect overturned, or rendered void; consequently he requires to be treated as an unbeliever. He is *condemned of himself*; that is, the gospel being a consistent whole, he that rejects some of its leading principles, while he professes to retain others, is certain to fall into self-contradiction; which if clearly pointed out in *a first and second admonition*, he will be compelled, if he persist, obstinately to shut his eyes against the light, and thus *sin* against the dictates of his own conscience.

It has been asked by persons who disapprove of all church proceedings on account of difference in religious principles, who is to judge what is heresy? We answer, those who are to judge what is immorality in dealing with loose characters. To suppose it impossible to judge what heresy is, or to deny that the power of so deciding rests in a Christian Church, is to charge the apostolic precept with impertinence. It is true the judgement of a church may be erroneous, as well as that of an individual; and it becomes them in their decisions to consider that they will all be revised at the great day: but the same may be said of all human judgement, civil or judicial, to which no one is so void of reason as on this account to object.

It has been farther objected, that censuring a person on account of his religious sentiments invades the right of private judgment, is inconsistent with the liberty of the gospel, and contrary to the leading principles on which protestants have separated from the Church of Rome, and Protestant Dissenters from the Church of England. The right of private judgement, while we claim no connection with others, is an undoubted right. We may be christians, infidels, or atheists, and none but God has any controul over us: but if we desire the friendship and esteem of good men notwith-

standing, or claim admission to a Christian Church; or should we be in it already, and claim to continue our situation, surely they would not be obliged to comply. If so our rite of private judgement must interfere with that of others, whose judgement tells them that there can be no fellowship between light and darkness, or communion between him that believeth and an infidel. If the liberty of the gospel consist in a right of fellowship with Christian Churches whatever be our principles, it will follow not only that unbelievers may claim visible communion with believers, but that no exclusions for immorality can be justified provided the party insists that his sentiments are in harmony with his practice. There is a great variety of opinion as to what is morality, as well as to what is truth. One loose character believes in polygamy, another in concubinage, and a third can see no harm in fornication, nor even in adultery, provided it be undiscovered.† If the Churches of Rome, and England, had done nothing more than exclude from their society characters whom they considered as deviating from the first principles of the gospel, without subjecting them to civil penalties or disabilities, however we might have disputed the truth of their doctrine, we could not have justly objected to their discipline. And on the other hand we should suppose that the separation of protestants from the one, and of protestant dissenters from the other, was for the sake of enjoying a purer church state, wherein they might act up to the laws of Zions King; and not that they might live as though there were no king in Israel, which is the case where every man does that which is right in his own eyes.

IN CASES OF NOTORIOUS AND COMPLICATED WICKEDNESS it appears that in the primitive churches immediate exclusion was the consequence. In the case of the incestuous Corinthian, there are no directions given for his being admonished, and excluded only in case of his being incorrigibly impenitent. The Apostle determined what should be done—*In the name of the Lord Jesus when ye are gathered together to deliver such an one unto Satan.* We cannot but consider it as an error in the discipline of some churches where persons have been detected of gross and aggravated wickedness, that their exclusion has been suspended, and in many cases omitted, on the ground of their professed repentance. While the evil was a secret, it was persisted in, but when exposed by a public detection, then

† Such was the morality taught by Mr. Hume.

repentance is brought forward, as it were in arrest of judgment. But can that repentance be genuine that is pleaded for the purpose of warding off the censures of a Christian Church? We are persuaded it cannot. The eye of a true penitent will be fixed upon the greatness of his sin, and he will be the last to discern, or talk of his repentance for it. So far from pleading it in order to evade censure, he will censure himself, and desire nothing more than that testimony may be borne against his conduct for the honour of Christ.

But allowing that repentance in such cases is sincere, still it is not of such account as to set aside the necessity of exclusion. The end to be answered by this measure is not merely the good of the party, but the *clearing* of a Christian Church from the very appearance of conniving at immorality; and which cannot be accomplished by repentance only. Though *Miriam* might be truly sorry for her sin in having spoken against *Moses*, and though she might be healed of her leprosy; yet *the Lord said unto Moses, If her father had but spit in her face, should she not be ashamed seven days? Let her be shut out from the camp seven days; and after that let her be received in again.**

We do not suppose, however, that *every* notorious fault requires immediate exclusion. The general rule given is, that NOTORIOUS EVILS SHOULD MEET WITH A PUBLIC REBUKE. *Them that sin, rebuke before all, that others also may fear.*† But this proceeding does not appear to amount to exclusion; it is rather of the nature of a *censure* or *reprimand*, accompanying an admonition. To us it appears that the circumstances attending a sin ought to determine whether it require immediate exclusion, or not. If these be highly aggravating; if there appear to have been premeditation, intention, and perseverance in the crime, *put away from amongst yourselves that wicked person*: but if circumstances extenuate rather than heighten the evil, solemn admonition, accompanied with rebuke, ought to suffice, and no exclusion to follow but in case of incorrigible impenitence.

There are also faults which do not come under the denomination of notorious sins, wherein directions are given for recovering the offenders WITHOUT ANY MENTION BEING MADE OF EXCLUSION, EITHER IMMEDIATE OR ULTIMATE. There is perhaps in all the churches a description

* Numb. 12. 14.

† 1 Tim. v. 20.

of men whose characters are far from being uniformly circumspect, and yet not sufficiently irregular to warrant their being separated from communion. They are disorderly walkers; busy bodies in other mens matters, while negligent of their own; in a word, unamiable characters. Now those that are such we are directed to exhort, and charge that they conduct themselves as becometh Christians. If after this they continue disorderly, observe a degree of distance in your conduct towards them; withdraw your intimacy; let them feel the frowns of their brethren: yet be not wholly reserved, but occasionally explain to them the reasons of your conduct, affectionately admonishing them at the same time to repentance and amendment of life. *Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us.* — For we hear that there are some who walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busy-bodies. Now them that are such we command, and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread. And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him that he may be ashamed: Yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother.† If Churches were to consult only their own reputation, they would often discard such persons at an early period: but where there is reason to hope that the heart is right in the main, great forbearance must be exercised, and long perseverance in endeavouring to recover. How many imperfections were discovered in the conduct of the twelve apostles, while their Lord was with them, and what an example of forbearance has he left us! One character reclaimed is of greater account and more to the honour of a Christian Church, than many discarded.

Finally, A watchful eye upon the state of the Church, and of particular members, with a seasonable interposition, may do more towards the preservation of good order than all other things put together. Discourage whisperings, back-bitings, and jealousies. Frown on tale-bearers, and give no ear to their tales. Nip contentions in the bud. Adjust differences in civil matters amongst yourselves. Bring together at an early period those in whom misconception and distrust have begun to operate, ere ill opinion ripen into settled dislike. By a frank and timely explanation in the presence

† 2 Thef. iii. 6....15.

of a common friend, that may be healed in an hour, which, if permitted to proceed, a series of years cannot eradicate. Be affectionately free with one another. Give tender and faithful hints where it appears to you that one of your brethren is in danger of being drawn aside from the principles or spirit of the gospel. Let all be given, from their first entering into connexion with you, to expect them. If any one take offence at such treatment, give him to understand that he who cannot endure a caution, or a reproof, is unfit for christian society; and is in the utmost danger of falling into mischief.

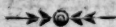
Brethren, consider what we say, and the Lord give you understanding in all things! The free circulation of the blood, and the proper discharge of all the animal functions, are not more necessary to the health of the body, than good discipline is to the prosperity of a community.

If it were duly considered how much the general interests of religion, and even the salvation of men, may be affected by the purity and harmony of Christian Churches, we should tremble at the thought of their being interrupted by us. The planting of a church in a neighbourhood, where the gospel is preached, and the ordinances of Christ administered in their purity, is a great blessing. It is a temple reared for God, in which he deigns to record his name, to meet with his humble worshippers, and to bless them. We have seen churches of this description, in the midst of a career of spiritual prosperity, edifying one another in love, and gathering souls to the Redeemers standard, all in a little time, blasted and ruined by some unhappy event that has thrown them into disorder. One of the members, it may be, has acted unworthily—he is reproved—his relations or particular acquaintances take on his side—discipline is interrupted—the Church is divided into parties—hard things are said on both sides—the bond of love is broken—tender minds are grieved, and retire—worship is but thinly attended, and the enjoyment of it is vanished—God's friends mourn in secret, and his enemies triumph, saying aha! so would we have it! O Brethren, It is a serious thing to occasion the ruin of a Church of Christ! *If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy!* Dearly beloved, farewell. Grace and Peace be with you.

Signed by order of the Association,

J. SUTCLIFF, Moderator.

BREVIA TES.



TUESDAY Evening VI. The worship was begun with singing Ps. 133. C. 16. Brother *Sutcliff* engaged in prayer, and was chosen Moderator. The Letters from the Churches were read; minutes taken of their contents; and after singing Hymn 441, Appendix, brother *Burton* closed the service with prayer.

WEDNESDAY Morning VI. The following Brethren engaged in prayer, brother *Obson* of London, brother *Oates* of Sutton, Ely, brother *Claydon* of Rushden, brother *Keelly*, who is invited to Northampton, and brother *Frieman* of Cotton-end.

..... Halfpast X. Met for public worship. Brother *Mills* prayed; brother *Fuller* preached from 1 John i. 3. *That which we have seen and heard, declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.* Brother *Blundel* prayed; and brother *Hopper* preached from Rom. iii. 25. *Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation;* and brother *Gill* prayed at the conclusion.

..... After dinner, the Ministers and Messengers retired to hear the Circular Letter, written by brother *Fuller*, which was approved and ordered to be printed. The Circular Letter for next year, *On the QUALIFICATIONS for Church Fellowship*, to be written by brother *Sutcliff*.

..... Evening VI. Brother *Edmonds* prayed; brother *Ryland* preached from Luke i. 17. *To turn the Disobedient to the wisdom of the Just.* A suitable Hymn, composed by one of the Missionaries in India, † was then sung, and the service concluded by brother *Ryland*.

THURSDAY Morning VI. Brother *Heighston* prayed; the Ministers related their experience; and brother *Morris* concluded the public services with prayer.

The Ministers and Messengers being convened, Contributions were made in several of the Brethren in aid of Village Preaching, and the concerns of the Association Fund adjusted. The Moderator prayed at the conclusion, and the meeting was then dissolved.

The next Association to be held at NOTTINGHAM, on Tuesday and Wednesday in WHITSUN-WEEK. Brother *Morris* and *Sutcliff* to preach.

Put up at the WHITE-SWAN, Beaf hill, Market-place.



§ This *Program* may be had of Mr. *Morris*, printed on Cards, price One Half-penny.



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N.B. The last of these Publications is from Scotland, a work of unusual merit, and well adapted to diffuse the knowledge of Christ.

